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11 August 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Noted by DD/I

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SUBJECT: Briefing of Board of National Estimates by
Boris Klosson, 11 August 1961

1. Mr. Klosson did not give a talk but used all of the time to answer questions.

2. The Embassy has very little evidence regarding the reaction of the Russian public to the President's speech on Berlin since the public is very reluctant to talk to US Embassy personnel. There ^{was} ~~are~~, however, no extra crowds around the newspapers posted on walls and no talk of war in Moscow as there was in London. Mr. Klosson observed that for the average Russian the recent watershed in history is the last war and not, for example, the death of Stalin. The average Russian simply can't believe that there will be another war and puts such thoughts out of his mind. When they see Khrushchev in uniform, however, the public gets a bit nervous. Generally speaking, the Soviet regime wants to hold down internal tension.

3. The bulk of the Soviet public goes along with Khrushchev on Berlin in the sense that they believe in the righteousness of the Soviet cause, but they do not want war.

4. The main interest of the people is in getting things for themselves--in getting a car and becoming bourgeois. The Russian public very seldom criticizes its government, or at least not in the presence of Embassy personnel. There was, however, a sharp reaction to the proposed export of Volgas to the US. Why, Embassy personnel were asked, do you want all these cars when you have so many of your own?

5. The Soviets are not afraid of West Germany per se. But they do fear that Adenauer may precipitate something which will involve the US, i.e. attempt to unify Germany by force.

6. On Berlin the Soviets are waiting for a proposal from us. Khrushchev believes that the boundary problem is more important to the Soviets than Berlin, although they do want to tidy Berlin up.

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7. Mr. Klosson was asked whether the elements of a bargain existed in which we would give some kind of tacit recognition to East Germany and the Soviets would leave Berlin pretty much as it is. Mr. Klosson did not think that the Russians would be willing to leave Berlin as it is and that they would insist on some changes there. Khrushchev's prestige is too committed for them to do otherwise.

8. Khrushchev probably believes that he can control the situation and that the question of whether the West would fight is not a real issue because it will never come to that. He probably leans in the direction of believing that we will not fight over Berlin. This view could change, however, now that the US has started moving.

9. Khrushchev would fight if he had the choice of seeming to capitulate or to fight, and he would do so largely for psychological reasons--because of pride and a desire that Russian strength should be recognized and respected. Given this fact, he has probably gone as far as he has in putting himself out on a limb because he is confident and because he believes that if he did not throw things around the West would drag its heels.

10. The Party Program and the 10-20 year economic projections will sound terribly hollow at the Party Congress if the real worry becomes whether war will break out in the next few weeks. They will also sound hollow if ~~he~~ can't announce to the Party Congress that there will be negotiations. Khrushchev is completely wrapped up in the Congress, which he hopes will help him to go down in history. He was already working on his speech in July. He told Klosson that he wanted it to present a clear picture to the Soviet people.

11. Chinese in Moscow always act like Stalinists. They travel in pairs and stand in a corner at parties where nobody talks to them, not even the Russians. The Soviets will quip about the Chinese. The Chinese students do such things as forego lunch in order to send money home. This attitude is very definitely non-Slavic and among the Soviets the "Nichevo" spirit is still strong. As a result antipathy is built up. In addition, the Chinese are very arrogant.

12. In terms of the Communist movement or the problem of opposition to Khrushchev internally, some of the tougher positions taken by Khrushchev have probably been influenced by the need to answer the Chinese.

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13. Klosson believes that there is internal opposition to Khrushchev, although there is no firm evidence of it. Its existence has been deduced from continuing arguments in the press over such things as heavy versus light industry. Khrushchev has done something for every segment of Soviet society but he has also done other things to hurt them too. This is particularly true of the elite whose dachas are under fire and whose salaries have been cut. There are many of the more privileged who would like the dialectic to stop at socialism because they fear that under Communism their privileges will end.

14. Lumumba University students have their problems with the Russians and we often gain by its existence. Many of the students get fed up. One Nigerian student told Klosson that his clothes had been stolen (the Russians paid him off but he then had to buy Russian clothes that he didn't like), and the Russians are annoyed when the students go out with Russian girls. The students mail and papers are read and the students know it. 10% of the students are from the USSR and they keep their eyes on the non-Soviet students. The students also hold the Russians to their promises, and the Russians don't like this. The students learn about the Russian system even better than Embassy personnel do and they don't like it. The Nigerian student told Klosson that he "would rather live in the bush than in this bureaucracy."

15. Koslov was pasty-faced after his recent heart attack and had lost much of his bounce. Mikoyan and Khrushchev treat each other as equals, e.g. they tease each other, but Koslov is deferential to Khrushchev. Prior to his appointment as Party Secretary other Party functionaries would both greet and talk to Koslov. Now they greet him and go. He is apparently tough with the members of the apparatus. On one occasion he chewed a Party official out for coming to a reception without shaving.

16. Klosson did not do any forecasting on the possible successor to Khrushchev. He feels, however, that Koslov is not another Khrushchev, and if he became part of a triumvirate he would not emerge as Khrushchev did. Mr. Klosson added that he could be wrong and that Koslov simply might be submerged now by the stronger personality of Khrushchev.

17. Mr. Klosson noted that he had a "distorted" view of Khrushchev--had never seen him drinking heavily or with his shoes off. Khrushchev has been drinking only light wine if anything at all. He

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still has a large front porch but is on a diet. His breathing is not labored, however, nor does he show any other external signs of serious disability. On the last occasion that Mr. Klosson saw him, Khrushchev said that he was tired but did not look tired. He is still a dynamic and vital person, but he conserves his energies--he will sit and listen with his pudgy hand on the table, he will start talking slowly at first, and then begin to warm up, gesticulating and bouncing around. Khrushchev recently described to Klosson how he shot the bear whose skin graced his dacha floor. Klosson was amazed at how quick and graceful he was in bringing his arms up to show how he held the gun, in spite of the big front porch.



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